GRAND JURY RETURNS BILLS AGAINST EACH; THE CHARGE IS LIBEL

Cards Written by Chief of Detectives and Attorney and Published in the Atlanta Newspapers Form the Basis

TWO BILLS FOUND AGAINST FELDER, ONE ON LANFORD

Both Men Who Have Criticised Each Through Atlanta Press Must Face Jury on Criminal Libel Charge

The Fulton county grand jury on Friday returned two true bills against Colonel Thomas B. Felder, lawyer, and one bill against Chief Newport A. Lanford, of the city detective department, all bills charging libel.

The action of the grand jury insures the airing of Colonel Felder's charges against Chief Lanford and of Chief Lanford's charges against Colonel Felder in open court, and in effect it puts it up to each man to prove his charges against the other or to stand convicted of criminal libel.

The two famous cards of Colonel Felder, printed in the Atlanta newspapers of May 26 and June 8, in which the attorney flayed the detective, form the basis for the indictments against the lawyer.

The bills charge that each man "unlawfully, wantonly, maliciously and with malice aforethought caused to be published the articles in question, with the intent to falsely villify and blacken the character of the other and to prejudice before the public the honesty, the integrity, the virtue and the reputation of the other."

The indictments charge that the statements made by each man against the other were disgraceful, false and malicious.

The grand jury consider the three bills for less than an hour, and returned the true bills on the testimony of three newspaper men who testified simply that the articles in question were signed and given out for publication by the two men against whom the indictments were returned. The three witnesses were M. D. Colfine, Sidney Ormond and W. P. Flythe.

WHAT FELDER SAID.

In his open letter to Chief Lanford, bearing date of June 7 and published in the Sunday morning papers of June 8. Colonel Felder begins by saying: "I shall now proceed to redeem the pledge heretofore made to lay bear through the columns of the papers your infamous career in the maladministration of the affairs of the official position which you disgrace and dishonor."

Proceeding, Colonel Felder quotes the lamented Rev. Sam P. Jones as follows: "When you shave a gentleman use a razor. When you shave a hog use a brick." And adds that even one of Chief Lanford's mental caliber must recognize the appropriateness of the brick.

WHAT COLONEL FELDER SAID.

Colonel Felder further declared that he had no doubt that an investigation of vice conditions by the grand jury would show "abundantly, your criminal connection therewith in all of its hideous deformity."

Continuing oClonel [sic] Felder said, "Within the past few weeks the hideous crimes committed by you, when exposed would create a panic about the habitués of a rot pit, and bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of the inmates of a brothel. They mark you a hireling scavenger of filth and falsehood, lost to every sense of propriety and recreant to every principle of honor."

Colonel Felder repeatedly charged in his letter that Chief Lanford had lied and set forth wherein he claimed that he lied.

The reply in one of the papers made to Colonel Felder's card by Chief Lanford forms the basis for the indictment against the latter.

WHAT CHIEF LANFORD SAID.

In replying to Colonel Felder on Sunday morning, June 8, Chief Lanford said[…]

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[…]in a morning paper: "Tom Felder is a contemptible liar, scoundrel and a coward. He is absolutely devoid of truth. He has lied so much that he doesn't know anything else. . . . The good people of Atlanta are tired of Felder. He has grafted so much upon the people of Atlanta and surrounding towns that all he can think of is graft. Apparently his system is saturated with it. He grafted upon the good people of Alanta [sic] in getting up a fund for prosecuting a murder case in which he had never been employed. I never heard of a reputable lawyer paying a man to retain him and get turned down, and then trying to impose upon the public by raising a fund on the false statement that he had been retained. He said it would require a fund of $6,000 to employ skilled detectives and the response was liberal. We would like to know what Tom Felder has done with the money subscribed."

Both Chief Lanford and Colonel Felder have been before the present grand jury on several occasions and it is said that both have denied in toto the charges made against each by the other, and at the same time asked a grand jury investigation of their controversy.

JURY MUST DETERMINE.

The action of the grand jury Friday is said to have eliminated the probability of an investigation by the jury of the dictograph incident per se.

It is said to have been the opinion of the solicitor from the first that no legal charge was involved in the controversy unless it was that of libel.

The grand jury has apparently made no effort to determine for itself the truth of the charges against Col. Felder or the charges against Chief Lanford, but has left their truth or falsity to be established by a jury.

The indictments were drawn under section 340 of the criminal code of Georgia, which makes libel a misdemeanor, the penalty being a fine of not more than $1,000 or one year in the chaingang, either or both penalties to be imposed at the discretion of the trial judge.

While it is possible that the case will be tried in the criminal division of the superior court, it is more probable that they will be heard in the city criminal court, where most misdemeanor cases are tried, the felonies occupying the greater portion of the time of the superior court.

WHAT THEY SAY.

Colonel Felder was engaged in the trial of a case in the Thrower building, when the indictments were returned against him. He was informed of the existence of the bill, and an attache of the solicitor's office announced to him that his bond had been axed at $250 in each case. Mr. Felder when seen by reporters said that he had no statement to make.

The bond of Chief Lanford was assessed at $500 and he will be asked to make it during the afternoon.

When told of the indictment Chief Lanford declared that he could substantiate every charge he has ever made against Mr. Felder.

It was learned after the indictments were returned that the grand jury took the matter up of its own initiative, and the bills were not presented by the solicitor's office in the routine manner.

It is said that the grand jury has now wiped its hands of the entire dictograph controversy.

It is known that Colonel Felder demanded an investigation and that Chief Lanford demanded a probe of their controversy, and apparently the grand jury has simply complied with the request of each man.